

Message Text

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PAGE 01 USBERL 03224 01 OF 02 231132Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 /067 W
-----002157 231143Z /10

R 231042Z DEC 77
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5919
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 3224

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PGOV WB GE
SUBJ: GARBAGE

REF: (A) USBER 1183, (B) 74 USBER 2261, (C) 74 USBER 2241

SUMMARY: BERLIN, A POLITICAL-GEOGRAPHICAL ISLAND IN A NOT ALWAYS FRIENDLY SEA, IS OFTEN BESET WITH PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY PERHAPS NO OTHER POLITICAL ENTITY IN THE WORLD, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF HONG KONG OR SINGAPORE. EVEN THE MOST MUNDANE SUBJECTS, SUCH AS THE DISPOSAL OF THE REFUSE GENERATED BY THE CITY'S TWO MILLION VERY AFFLUENT INHABITANTS, CAN HAVE INTERNATIONAL OVERTONES IN ADDITION TO PRODUCING LOCAL POLITICAL HEADACHES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN 1974 THE SENAT AND THE GDR REACHED AN AGREEMENT (REFS B AND C) FOR THE DELIVERY OF WEST BERLIN'S REFUSE TO GARBAGE DUMPS IN THE GDR (WHERE, TRADITIONALLY BEFORE THE WAR, BERLIN HAD ALWAYS SENT ITS REFUSE FOR DISPOSAL). THE SENAT AGREED
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PAGE 02 USBERL 03224 01 OF 02 231132Z

TO DELIVER PROCESSED AND COMPRESSED REFUSE AT THE RATE OF 40,000 TONS PER MONTH. TO MEET ITS OBLIGATION THE WEST BERLIN SENAT HAS BUILT A DM 130 MILLION REFUSE PROCESSING PLANT IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CITY (NEUKOELLN). UNFORTUNATELY, SHORTLY BEFORE THE PROCESSING PLANT WAS TO GO INTO OPERATION IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT WHEN THE THEN SENATOR FOR FINANCE, HEINZ STRIEK (SPD), SIGNED THE CONTRACT TO HAVE

THE PROCESSING PLANT BUILT IN 1974, HE ACTED ON BAD LEGAL ADVICE FROM HIS OWN OFFICE AND FAILED TO SEE TO IT THAT ALL NECESSARY BUILDING CODE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS WERE MET. AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE SAME LAWYER WHO LAST YEAR BROUGHT THE SUCCESSFUL ACTION AGAINST THE SENAT'S PLANS TO BUILD A POWER PLANT AT OBERJAEGERWEG IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE CITY (REF A) FILED A COMPLAINT ON BEHALF OF AN ELDERLY DENTIST AGAINST THE SENAT, CAUSING CONSTRUCTION OF THE REFUSE PROCESSING PLANT TO BE HALTED AND MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE IT TO BE PUT INTO OPERATION AS PLANNED ON JANUARY 1, 1978. FOR NEARLY TWO MONTHS THE SENAT HAS BEEN WRESTLING WITH WAYS OF RESOLVING ITS GARBAGE PROBLEM. THERE ARE NO DUMPS WITHIN WEST BERLIN LARGE ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE DAILY MOUNTAIN OF REFUSE PRODUCED BY THE CITY'S RESIDENTS, AND IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY (IF NOT LEGALLY) IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE SENAT TO REQUISITION ANY OF WEST BERLIN'S REMAINING OPEN-SPACE TO BE USED FOR SUCH A PURPOSE.

2. ULTIMATELY, TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, THE SENAT HAD TO TAKE A CALCULATED RISK AND APPROACH THE EAST TO DETERMINE IT IF WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO WORK OUT A PRACTICAL INTERIM SOLUTION WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE SENAT TO DELIVER ITS REFUSE AND GARBAGE TO THE EAST UNDER TERMS OTHER THAN THOSE CALLED FOR BY THE 1974 AGREEMENT. THE SENAT WAS FROM THE OUTSET SKEPTICAL THAT AN AD HOC AGREEMENT COULD BE ARRIVED AT, GIVEN THE GDR'S PROVEN DESIRE TO SEEK TO NEGOTIATE A FORMAL SETTLE-CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 USBERL 03224 01 OF 02 231132Z

MENT ON ANY AND ALL ISSUES WHICH ARISE AFFECTING IT AND WEST BERLIN.

3. AFTER OBTAINING ALLIED PERMISSION TO SOUND OUT THE EAST THE SENAT AUTHORIZED THE WEST BERLIN FIRM WHICH HAD NEGOTIATED THE TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REFUSE DELIVERY TO THE GDR, BERLIN CONSULT, TO CONTACT ITS EAST GERMAN COUNTERPART, BERGBAU-HANDEL, TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM, IF POSSIBLE. TO THE SENAT'S SURPRISE AND DELIGHT THE TWO COMMERCIAL PARTNERS TO THE TRASH DISPOSAL AGREEMENT REACHED A QUICK UNDERSTANDING, WHICH WAS APPARENTLY APPROVED BY THE APPROPRIATE OFFICIAL GDR OFFICES, TO PERMIT DELIVERY OF 20,000 TONS OF UNPROCESSED AND UNCOMPRESSED TRASH EACH MONTH FOR A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS. ALTHOUGH NO OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS HAVE PASSED BETWEEN THE SENAT AND GDR OFFICES CONCERNED, THE SENAT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN, PETER SOETJE, HAS MADE A POINT OF EMPHASIZING VERY CLEARLY THAT THE SENAT APPRECIATES THE DEGREE OF COOPERATION SHOWN BY THE EAST ON THE ISSUE TO DATE.

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PAGE 01 USBERL 03224 02 OF 02 231141Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 3224

4. COMMENT: THE SENAT HAS COME UNDER CONSIDERABLE FIRE IN THE WEST BERLIN PRESS DURING THE PAST WEEKS BECAUSE OF THE MISMANAGEMENT OF THE TRASH DISPOSAL ISSUE. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRESENT SENAT DO NOT FEEL THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MESS SINCE THE DECISIONS WHICH LED TO THE CURRENT DIFFICULTIES WERE MADE BY THE PREVIOUS SENAT THREE YEARS AGO. NONETHELESS, THE PRESENT SENAT HAS ACCEPTED THE NECESSITY OF DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM OPENLY AND RESOLVING IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. SENAT SPOKESMAN SOETJE TOLD MISSION OFFICER IN CONFIDENCE LAST WEEK THAT GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE IS QUITE CONCERNED THAT THE PRESS COVERAGE OF THE TRASH PROCESSING AND COMPRESSING PLANT, WHICH IS BEING GIVEN WIDE PRESS PLAY IN WEST BERLIN'S PRESS DURING THE CURRENT SLOW NEWS SEASON, COULD DAMAGE HIS GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE FAR OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM CONCERNED. SOETJE ADDED THAT THE GOVERNING MAYOR IS PARTICULARLY FRUSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT THE ULTIMATE RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM CANNOT BE INFLUENCED BY POLITICAL DECISIONS, BUT WILL BE RESOLVED ONLY THROUGH THE COMPLETION OF TECHNICAL AND LEGAL PROCEDURES WHICH HAVE THEIR OWN SPEED

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PAGE 02 USBERL 03224 02 OF 02 231141Z

AND MOMENTUM. SOETJE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE BERLIN FDP APPEARS INTENT ON JOINING THE CDU IN ESTABLISHING AN

INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE WHERE THE FAULT IN THE
MATTER LIES. SOETJE IS NOT CONCERNED SO MUCH THAT AN
INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE WOULD UNCOVER FURTHER POLITICALLY
DAMAGING FACTS BECAUSE, HE SAYS, THE FACTS ARE ALREADY ON
THE TABLE: A SENATSDIREKTOR WAS FACED WITH A CHOICE IN 1974
AND MADE THE WRONG DECISION. THE SENAT IS NOW TRYING TO
CORRECT THIS DECISION. WHAT CONCERNS SOETJE AND THE
GOVERNING MAYOR, HOWEVER, IS THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN
INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE WILL KEEP THE ISSUE ALIVE BEFORE
THE PUBLIC AND COULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF HARMING THE GOVERN-
MENT'S IMAGE OVER A PROTRACTED PERIOD OF TIME.GEORGE

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